

# Nice to Know You? Testing Contact, Cultural, and Group Threat Theories of Anti-Black and Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes\*

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*Objective.* Many racial/ethnic policies in the United States—from desegregation to affirmative action policies—presume that contact improves racial/ethnic relations. Most research, however, tests related theories in isolation from one another and focuses on black-white contact. This article tests contact, cultural, and group threat theories to learn how contact in different interactive settings affects whites' stereotypes of blacks and Hispanics, now the largest minority group in the country. *Method.* We use multi-level modeling on 2000 General Social Survey data linked to Census 2000 metropolitan statistical area/county-level data. *Results.* Net of the mixed effects of regional culture and racial/ethnic composition, contact in certain interactive settings ameliorates anti-black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes. *Conclusions.* Cultural and group threat theories better explain anti-black stereotypes than anti-Hispanic stereotypes, but as contact theory suggests, stereotypes can be overcome with relatively superficial contact under the right conditions. Results provide qualified justification for the preservation of desegregation and affirmative action policies.

Many recent American policies concerning race and ethnicity—from desegregation to affirmative action policies—are premised and defended on the belief that whites' contact with minorities ameliorates racial and ethnic tensions. Legal scholars note that the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court decision rested in part on the assumption that school segregation impedes cultural awareness that can be gained from black-white interaction in the classroom (Lockhart et al., 1996). In the policy realm of housing, one of the arguments made by members of Congress in favor of the

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Fair Housing Act (1968) was that the law would “overcome the ignorance and fears of whites which previously had blocked attempts to lower the black-white barrier” (Dubofsky, 1969:154). Contemporary social scientists share this sentiment, suggesting that neighborhood integration will reduce prejudice (Massey and Denton, 1993:236). Finally, some scholars argue that university and workplace affirmative action programs bring racial/ethnic groups in contact with each other, promote racial/ethnic awareness, and reduce prejudice (Bowen and Bok, 1998; Hurtado, 1999).

Compared to the vast body of research on the determinants of these policy attitudes (Krysan, 2000), scholars know relatively little about whether the specific forms of majority-minority contact that these policies are supposed to promote actually disconfirm what Allport ([1954] 1979) calls the “rationalizers” of prejudice—negative stereotypes. Consistent with the assumptions of desegregation and affirmative action policies, contact theory suggests that contact between majority and minority group members may help to disconfirm negative stereotypes of minority groups (Allport, [1954]1979; Sigelman and Welch, 1993). Other theories are not so optimistic. Cultural theory suggests that the largely negative collective images of minority groups—particularly of blacks—that are rooted in history and culture and transmitted through socialization are too powerful to be displaced by contact with minorities (Blumer, 1958; Sears, 1988; Huddy and Sears, 1995). Group threat theory suggests that a large presence of a minority group living near whites—particularly a large presence of blacks—is associated with group conflict, group threat, and heightened stereotypes (Blalock, 1967; Bonacich, 1972; Olzak, 1992), not the kind of amicable relations that contemporary strands of contact theory might expect.

Although some previous research has furthered our understanding of the effects of contact and the determinants of stereotypes, this theoretical debate has by no means been resolved. Most previous research has tested contact, cultural, and group threat theories in isolation from one another.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it is unknown if they hold weight when they are tested against one another. Moreover, theoretical and empirical work has focused on black-white relations. Therefore, it is unclear whether these theories can explain whites’ attitudes toward Hispanics, now the largest minority group in the country. Finally, it is uncertain if and how contact in different interactive settings has different effects on racial/ethnic attitudes. Because desegregation and affirmative action policies are typically targeted at specific interactive settings (e.g., neighborhood, school, workplace), a better understanding of the effects of majority-minority contact in specific settings is essential if social science is to inform policy.

This article extends previous research by testing contact, cultural, and group threat theories using multi-level modeling on 2000 General Social

<sup>1</sup>However, McLaren (2003) tests these theories or their variants against one another in explaining attitudes toward immigrant expulsion among Western Europeans.

Survey (GSS) data linked to Census 2000 metropolitan statistical area (MSA)/county-level data. It examines whether non-Hispanic whites who know blacks and Hispanics from their communities, schools, workplaces, and as relatives are less likely to hold stereotypes of these groups, net of factors that cultural and group threat theories suggest will shape stereotypes. Although this article does *not* test the effects of desegregation and affirmative action policies on stereotypes, it has implications for them.

## **Background**

The study of prejudice and stereotypes has a long history in social psychology, sociology, and political science/political psychology. The distinction between prejudice and stereotypes is somewhat blurry because commonly used definitions of prejudice tend to incorporate notions of stereotypes. Allport ([1954] 1979:9), for example, defines prejudice as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization” of a group. Blumer (1958:4) offers a broader definition of prejudice as a cultural product consisting of feelings that the out-group is alien, different, and inferior relative to one’s own ethnic/racial group. Stereotypes, though, are faulty and inflexible generalizations that lack the affective component of prejudice. Negative stereotypes *rationalize* prejudice against minorities by adapting “to the prevailing temper of prejudice or the needs of the situation,” according to Allport ([1954] 1979:204).

Blumer (1958) suggests that in the contemporary United States there is a racial/ethnic hierarchy in which the stereotypes some minority groups endure are more negative than those endured by other minority groups. As a result of their enslavement and its lingering political, economic, scientific, and religious justifications (Drake, 1987), blacks have faced and continue to face negative stereotypes regarding, for example, their intelligence, work ethic, and morality. Although Hispanics have endured similar stereotypes, they have to a greater extent been incorporated into white society; some Hispanic groups have been labeled as white (Omi and Winant, 1986);<sup>2</sup> and generally, survey data indicate that anti-Hispanic prejudice and stereotypes have been and continue to be less widespread than anti-black prejudice and stereotypes (Smith and Dempsey, 1983; Wilson, 1996). Though whites may share similar stereotypes of blacks and Hispanics, they may hold less negative stereotypes of Hispanics. The processes shaping anti-black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes may be different, too, given each group’s different historical experiences.

<sup>2</sup> Omi and Winant (1986:75) report that after the Mexican War, Mexicans were defined as white and “accorded the political-legal status of ‘free white persons.’” Today, the U.S. Census views Hispanics as an ethnic group (who may be of any “race”), but blacks as a distinct racial group.

### *Contact Theory*

Allport's ([1954] 1979) seminal work, *The Nature of Prejudice*, forms the basis of what we call "contact theory." Although this theory was largely developed to explain anti-black prejudice, it suggests that as majority group members come into contact with other minorities, they will be less likely to hold prejudicial attitudes. By exposing majority group members to new information about minority groups, contact helps majority group members disconfirm negative stereotypes and develop more favorable views of minority groups. Allport ([1954] 1979) argues that the effects of contact on prejudice vary depending on the quality and quantity of contact, whether contact is voluntary, the extent to which the contact is between majority and minority members of "equal status," whether contact occurs in a competitive or collaborative environment, and the area—or the "interactive setting"—in which contact occurs.

Tests of contact theory generally support Allport's ([1954] 1979) hypothesis so long as its numerous conditions are fulfilled (see Pettigrew, 1998 for a review). For example, whites who report having black friends of more or less equal status have more favorable views of blacks (Jackman and Crane, 1986). In fact, friendships and acquaintanceships of all kinds promote more favorable attitudes among whites, blacks, and Hispanics alike (Sigelman and Welch, 1993; Powers and Ellison, 1995; Welch and Sigelman, 2000). Some evidence also suggests that white-Hispanic acquaintanceships promote favorable views of Hispanics (Stein, Post, and Rinden, 2000).

Does simply *knowing* blacks and Hispanics disconfirm stereotypes? For Allport ([1954] 1979), knowing a minority represents a relatively superficial form of contact that may be less likely to reduce prejudice or disconfirm stereotypes. To the extent, though, that such contact occurs in interactive settings that meet some or all of Allport's optimal conditions, contact theory may expect knowing a minority group member to disconfirm stereotypes (Pettigrew, 1998).

For example, because residence in a specific community generally represents an individual's or family's social status (Hunter, 1974; Schwirian, Hankins, and Ventresca, 1990), knowing minority group members in one's community may represent a unique, equal-status form of contact. In spite of this, early research found mixed support for the positive effects of black-white contact in communities (see Pettigrew, 1998). More recent research suggests that present-day, black-white contact in communities may not reduce anti-black prejudice, which Yancey (1999) attributes to a greater level of competition between blacks and whites in urban neighborhoods. On the other hand, limited evidence suggests that residential contact may disconfirm anti-Hispanic stereotypes (Stein, Post, and Rinden, 2000).

It is less clear whether school and workplace contact disconfirm unfavorable stereotypes. Schools and workplaces are interactive settings in

which contact may be involuntary and between individuals of unequal status; also, they dually encourage collaboration and competition. Some evidence indicates that despite the fact that school contact does not meet *all* of Allport's ([1954] 1979) optimal conditions, whites' contact with blacks in their schools—be they primary or secondary schools or universities—disconfirms unfavorable stereotypes of blacks and reduces African-American prejudice (Ford, 1986; Bowen and Bok, 1998; see Hurtado, 1999 for a review). Research further suggests that whites' contact with Hispanics in schools may produce similar results (see Pettigrew, 1998). Comparatively less is known about the effects of workplace contact, but since it may meet fewer of Allport's optimal conditions, contact theory would expect workplace contact to be less successful in disconfirming negative stereotypes.

Finally, contact theory would expect that because of its high degree of intimacy, relative frequency, and its potentially voluntary nature, family contact should disconfirm negative stereotypes. Whites who have contact with blacks and Hispanics in their families should be exposed to new information that undermines their negative stereotypes of these groups. To the best of our knowledge, however, no research has investigated this specific hypothesis.

A potential problem with contact theory is that while contact may disconfirm stereotypes and reduce prejudice, more prejudiced individuals may avoid contact with minorities. To deal with selection bias in the absence of longitudinal data, Pettigrew (1998:69) recommends using econometric statistical techniques and/or finding “an intergroup situation that severely limits choice to participate.” Additionally, McLaren (2003) suggests incorporating variables that come causally prior to prejudice in order to control for individuals' unwillingness to have contact with minorities. Heeding Pettigrew's first recommendation, previous research using endogenous switching models concludes: “There is no evidence that the observed association between interracial contact and racial attitudes is an artifact of unobserved selection processes, and hence there is no reason to reject the findings of previous research conducted within the contact tradition” (Powers and Ellison, 1995:220). By using measures of contact that may be more a function of one's structural location in society than one's willingness to associate with minorities, we heed Pettigrew's second recommendation in an attempt to minimize selection bias, as is further discussed below. Following McLaren's suggestion, we also include variables that cultural and group threat theories suggest come causally prior to prejudice, thereby attempting to statistically control for individuals' unwillingness to have contact with minorities.

### ***Cultural Theory***

What we call “cultural theory” builds on Blumer's (1958) and Sears's (1988) explanations of anti-black prejudice, but may help to explain

anti-black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes as well. Cultural theory takes as its starting point that the development of prejudice and stereotypes is a historical and cultural process. Majority groups define minority groups' respective subordinate positions in society, creating abstract and, often, negative collective images of them. These images become embedded in culture as stereotypes, but vary from place to place according to the local, historical conditions that gave rise to majority group members' feelings of superiority (Blumer, 1958). Stereotypes are then transmitted across generations and cultures through preadulthood and adulthood socialization processes. Not only do these stereotypes remain relatively stable or become more rigid in adulthood, but contact will do little to change them (Sears, 1988).

From this perspective, blacks' enslavement set into motion a process in which whites and white-dominated political, economic, scientific, and religious institutions came to define blacks as inferior, creating and perpetuating such negative stereotypes of blacks as unintelligent, lazy, and morally inept (Drake, 1987). Although rooted in American culture as a whole, anti-black prejudice and stereotypes have been and continue to be most firmly rooted in Southern culture, with its remnants of slavery and Jim Crow discrimination. Though evidence indicates that anti-black prejudice has declined roughly one and one-half times faster in the South than elsewhere in the country from the early 1970s to the mid 1980s (based on authors' calculations of Firebaugh and Davis, 1988; Quillian, 1996), anti-black prejudice and stereotypes were more pronounced in the South as late as the 1990s (Wilson, 1996). In fact, one study estimates that anti-black prejudice was four times greater in the South in 1991 (Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens, 1997). By internalizing the racial norms of this climate, whites raised in the South and whites currently living in the South are more likely to develop anti-black prejudice, according to previous research (Miller and Sears, 1986; Quillian, 1996). By the same token, cultural theory would expect anti-black stereotypes to be more pronounced among whites raised in the South and whites currently living in the South.

Comparatively little evidence exists concerning the significance of (regional) culture in the development of anti-Hispanic stereotypes and prejudice. Martinez (1993), however, suggests that historical processes have contributed to the creation of anti-Hispanic stereotypes, particularly in the West. It is here that Hispanics have been colonized and reduced to semi-slave labor, sometimes also experiencing the rapes, tortures, and lynchings that blacks did in the South. These actions gave rise to and were justified on the basis of stereotypes of Hispanics—and Mexicans in particular—as lazy and morally inept (Martinez, 1993). Although cultural theory would expect anti-Hispanic stereotypes to be more pronounced among whites raised in the West and whites currently living in the West, the precise extent to which these stereotypes are rooted in the West and passed on through cultural socialization is unclear.

### **Group Threat Theory**

If cultural theory suggests that the roots of prejudice and stereotypes lie in cultural images and norms transmitted through socialization, group threat theory suggests that the roots of prejudice and stereotypes lie in something more tangible and concrete. From the perspective of group threat theory, large proportions of minorities<sup>3</sup> in a given area<sup>4</sup> are a precondition of minority-majority conflict, threat, prejudice, and anti-minority stereotypes (Blalock, 1967; Bonacich, 1972; Lieberson, 1980; Olzak, 1992). Yet, sociologists' theoretical explanations of this majority-minority conflict vary. For some, a sizable presence of minorities leads to greater competition for jobs, scarce economic resources, and thus economic "group threat" on the part of the majority group (Bonacich, 1972). For others, a sizable presence of minorities represents a political threat to members of the majority group (Blalock, 1967).

Although explanations and emphases continue to be disputed, a wealth of research has generally shown that there is a direct relationship between the size of the black population in a given area and whites' prejudice toward and stereotypes of blacks. For example, contemporary studies of whites' attitudes offer evidence of a direct relationship between the percentage of the population that is black and anti-black prejudice among whites (Glaser, 1994; Quillian, 1996; Taylor, 1998; but see Oliver and Mendelberg, 2000),<sup>5</sup> whites' feelings of in-group solidarity (Giles and Evans, 1985), and whites' likelihood of voting for former KKK leader David Duke (Giles and Buckner, 1993). While some theory suggests a curvilinear relationship between the percentage of the population that is black and anti-black prejudice (Blalock, 1967), no study of which we are aware indicates a definitive point at which animosity toward blacks recedes.

Some historical research suggests that larger proportions of groups other than blacks—such as Chinese, Japanese, and European immigrants—may have threatened (native) whites, particularly in the 19th and early-20th centuries (Bonacich, 1972; Lieberson, 1980; Olzak, 1992). However, contemporary research casts some doubt on the ability of group threat theory to explain prejudice toward and stereotypes of groups other than blacks (Taylor, 1998). Particularly relevant for the current study is that

<sup>3</sup>This theory often takes racial/ethnic composition as its central measure of threat, albeit contemporary strands of contact theory suggest that this variable represents opportunities for interaction (Sigelman et al., 1996).

<sup>4</sup>Previous research has measured racial/ethnic composition at various levels of aggregation, ranging from countries (McLaren, 2003) and Census regions (Quillian, 1996) to much lower levels of aggregation such as Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA)/counties (Taylor, 1998). In this article, we measure it at the MSA/county level for reasons noted in the data section below.

<sup>5</sup>Because blacks have historically been and continue to be concentrated in the South, it is unclear whether racial composition or Southern cultural traditions are the cause of greater levels of prejudice in the South. Like Oliver and Mendelberg (2000), we recognize that anti-black attitudes may vary by racial composition *and* region and test for this possibility.

research on anti-Hispanic prejudice has produced mixed results. Though some studies indicate that there should be a relationship between the proportion of Hispanics in a given area and anti-Hispanic stereotypes (Huddy and Sears, 1995; Stein, Post, and Rinden, 2000), others do not (Hood and Morris, 1997; Taylor, 1998).

Based on the theoretical and empirical work above, group threat theory should explain anti-black stereotypes better than anti-Hispanic stereotypes. Whether this pattern will hold after the effects of other variables are controlled is less clear because most research has tested contact, cultural, and group threat theories in isolation from one another.

## Data

To test the hypotheses outlined above, we use General Social Survey (GSS) 2000 data, collected by the National Opinion Research Council (NORC), linked to Census 2000 data. The GSS is a multi-stage, stratified sample of the noninstitutionalized, English-speaking adult population living in the continental United States (Davis, Smith, and Marsden, 2001). Because we are interested in non-Hispanic whites' stereotypes of Hispanics and blacks, we limit our sample to non-Hispanic whites by excluding blacks and whites who identify their ethnicity or race as wholly or partly Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or "Other Spanish," which is consistent with the most recent Census (2000) definitions. In analyses of anti-black stereotypes, as many as 889 non-Hispanic whites are included in the sample; in analyses of anti-Hispanic stereotypes, the sample includes as many as 854 non-Hispanic whites.<sup>6</sup>

GSS data are well suited for the multi-level analyses we undertake. Upon permission from NORC, we were able to link respondents to the 100 nonmetropolitan counties and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) from which they were sampled (see Davis, Smith, and Marsden, 2001 for further discussion on NORC's sampling strategy).<sup>7</sup> County/MSA racial and ethnic composition measures are based on Census 2000 data and were compiled by the Lewis Mumford Center (available at <http://mumford1.dyndns.org/cen2000/data.html>).<sup>8</sup> Hence, respondents constitute one level of analysis, while the counties and MSAs in which respondents are embedded constitute

<sup>6</sup>This discrepancy is largely the result of respondents who offered a meaningful response to a filter question regarding blacks but *not* regarding Hispanics (see below). These individuals are not substantively different from the rest of the sample (e.g., in terms of age, sex, education, etc.).

<sup>7</sup>Due to missing data, the Level 2 sample size is 99 for most analyses of anti-black stereotypes and 98 for most analyses of anti-Hispanic stereotypes (see also footnote 12).

<sup>8</sup>It may be preferable to measure racial/ethnic composition at the Census tract or block level, but it is not possible to link the GSS respondents to their Census tracts or blocks due to confidentiality concerns. The consequence is that the coefficient estimates for these measures will likely be conservative estimates of the "true" effects of these measures (Quillian, 1996).

the other. In the language of multi-level modeling, respondents' characteristics are Level 1 variables; characteristics of the county/MSA are Level 2 variables.

### ***Dependent Variables***

Consistent with Allport's ([1954] 1979) description of stereotypes as irrational generalizations about a group of people, we use three questions to measure stereotypes, some of which have been employed in previous research (Wilson, 1996; Taylor, 1998).<sup>9</sup> The questions ask whites to rate, on a scale from 1 to 7, the degree to which blacks, Hispanics, and whites are "unintelligent," "lazy," and "lacking commitment to strong families." We recode each measure so that higher scores indicate more negative stereotypes. As Taylor (1998) notes, the substantial variability of these measures makes social desirability less likely relative to other measures of racial/ethnic attitudes. Of all the measures above, the minimum variance is 1 and the maximum is 1.69.

Because whites judge other groups in reference to themselves (Blumer, 1958), we create an index of stereotypes that makes use of whites' placement of their own group versus blacks and their own group versus Hispanics, which is also in line with previous research (Wilson, 1996). Next, we sum these difference scores to construct stereotype scales that range from -6 to 16 for anti-black stereotypes and from -8 to 16 for anti-Hispanic stereotypes, with higher scores indicating more unfavorable stereotypes.<sup>10</sup> As Table 1 indicates, whites have, on average, more unfavorable stereotypes of blacks than they do of Hispanics. Furthermore, this difference is statistically significant ( $t = 13.63$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which is consistent with previous research (Wilson, 1996).

### ***Level 1 Independent Variables: Contact, Culture, and Personal Characteristics***

To test hypotheses derived from contact theory, we use measures of contact in four different interactive settings, labeled community, school, workplace,

<sup>9</sup>Some other questions measuring stereotypes—ones that ask, for example, whether racial/ethnic groups are patriotic and whether they prefer to live on welfare—were asked only in the 1990 GSS module. We also considered using other questions asking whether racial/ethnic groups tend to be violence prone and poor, but these questions either loaded on another factor in our factor analyses and/or their inclusion reduced the reliability of the dependent variables.

<sup>10</sup>The scale is less reliable for anti-Hispanic stereotypes (Cronbach's alpha = 0.59) than for anti-black stereotypes (alpha = 0.71). This may be because a negative collective image of Hispanics was not built on a coherent ideology of inferiority, as is the case with blacks.

TABLE 1  
Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Theoretical Interest, 2000 General Social Survey and Census 2000 Data

	Mean (SD)	Sample Range	Description
<i>Dependent Variables</i>			
Anti-black stereotypes	2.25 (3.39)	-6 to 18	Three-question index measuring stereotypes of blacks as unintelligent, lazy, and lacking commitment to their families, where higher scores indicate more unfavorable stereotypes.
Anti-Hispanic stereotypes	1.07 (3.16)	-8 to 16	Three-question index measuring stereotypes of Hispanics as unintelligent, lazy, and lacking commitment to their families, where higher scores indicate more unfavorable stereotypes.
<i>Level 1 Independent Variables</i>			
Community contact with a black	0.55 (0.50)	0 to 1	Whether respondent knows a black in his/her community (= 1) or not (= 0).
Community contact with a Hispanic	0.46 (0.50)	0 to 1	Whether respondent knows a Hispanic in his/her community (= 1) or not (= 0).
School contact with a black	0.43 (0.49)	0 to 1	Whether respondent knows a black from school or college (= 1) or not (= 0).
School contact with a Hispanic	0.33 (0.47)	0 to 1	Whether respondent knows a Hispanic from school or college (= 1) or not (= 0).
Family contact with a black	0.09 (0.28)	0 to 1	Whether respondent knows a black as a relative (= 1) or not (= 0).
Family contact with a Hispanic	0.12 (0.32)	0 to 1	Whether respondent knows a Hispanic as a relative (= 1) or not (= 0).
Workplace contact with a black <sup>a</sup>	0.65 (0.48)	0 to 1	Whether (employed) respondent knows a black at work (= 1) or not (= 0).
Workplace contact with a Hispanic <sup>a</sup>	0.54 (0.50)	0 to 1	Whether (employed) respondent knows a Hispanic at work (= 1) or not (= 0).
South at age 16	0.28 (0.45)	0 to 1	Whether respondent lived in the South at age 16 (= 1) or not (= 0).
West at age 16	0.27 (0.45)	0 to 1	Whether respondent lived in the West at age 16 (= 1) or not (= 0).
<i>Level 2 Independent Variables</i>			
Percent black	11.95 (12.06)	0.1 to 57.5	Percentage of blacks in respondents' counties/Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) expressed as whole numbers.
Percent Hispanic	8.69 (11.16)	0.1 to 57.3	Percentage of Hispanics in respondents' counties/Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) expressed as whole numbers.
South	0.40 (0.49)	0 to 1	Whether the county or metropolitan area in which the respondent currently resides is in the South (= 1) or not (= 0).
West	0.28 (0.45)	0 to 1	Whether the county or metropolitan area in which the respondent currently resides is in the West (= 1) or not (= 0).

<sup>a</sup>The question upon which this measure is based was asked only of employed respondents.

and family contact.<sup>11</sup> The questions ask respondents whether they know any blacks/Hispanics from the community where they now live, from the school or college that they attended, from the place where they work,<sup>12</sup> or as relatives. Affirmative answers are coded 1; negative answers are coded 0.

As noted above, these measures of contact may be more a function of individuals' structural locations in society than their willingness to associate with minorities. If these are measures of willingness to associate with minorities, then they should be internally reliable: whites who avoid contact with blacks and Hispanics should avoid them in all or most settings. Yet, this is not the case. Cronbach's alphas for the three measures of contact asked of the entire sample are 0.26 (black-white contact) and 0.36 (Hispanic-white contact). By way of contrast, reliabilities for the three items that form our dependent variables are 0.72 and 0.59, respectively.

This still leaves open the possibility that our measures of contact are proxies for segregation. Yet, supplementary analyses reveal that measures of county/metropolitan-area segregation do not significantly affect stereotypes; their inclusion in the model does not substantively alter the effects of contact. Although our measures of contact may be proxies for *neighborhood* segregation, we cannot fully test for this because confidentiality concerns preclude us from linking respondents to their neighborhoods. We were able to conduct supplementary analyses on a GSS question that asks respondents whether any *black* families live in their neighborhood now. This variable is inversely and significantly associated with anti-black stereotypes, but its inclusion does not substantively alter the effects of contact (results available on request). Because a comparable question is not asked about Hispanics, we cannot completely discount the possibility that Hispanic-white contact is a proxy for neighborhood segregation.

Turning to the operationalization of cultural theory, we follow previous research by including dichotomous measures indicating whether respondents lived in the South or the West when they were 16 years old (Miller and Sears, 1986).<sup>13</sup> (Current region of residence is added in the Level 2

<sup>11</sup>Prior to the interviewer asking about contact in different interactive settings, the interviewer asked a "filter question" to determine whether respondents *personally* know any blacks or Hispanics. If respondents answered affirmatively, then they were asked the questions used as independent variables in this analysis. If not, then the interviewer moved on to other questions. We coded respondents who said that they did not personally know any blacks/Hispanics as 0, indicating that they did not know any blacks/Hispanics in any interactive settings.

<sup>12</sup>These questions were asked only of respondents who were currently employed (about 71 percent of the sample used in other analyses). Additionally, the Level 2 sample sizes in these models decrease by 6 to 93 and 92, respectively. Thus, there is less variation in anti-black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes among counties/MSAs in models examining workplace contact.

<sup>13</sup>The South Atlantic, West South Central, and East South Central Census regions are coded as being in the South, thereby including all slave states except for Missouri (see Davis, Smith, and Marsden, 2001). The West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific regions are coded as being in the West.

model below.) We also include age (in years), expecting to find support for cultural theory's implication that older people are more likely to express stereotypes.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, we include family income<sup>15</sup> (below federal poverty threshold (2000)<sup>16</sup> for family of four = 1, otherwise = 0) because this variable may mediate the effects of community contact as contact theory implies, or it may reflect feelings of economic threat as some variants of group threat theory imply. Because we include *family* income, we also control for marital status (married = 1, otherwise = 0). Finally, we control for other factors that are often used as controls in analyses of racial attitudes, including education (years of school completed) and sex (male = 1, female = 0). Given the results of previous research, we expect more educated individuals to be more tolerant (see Krysan, 2000 for a review), although the effects of gender are unclear.

### ***Level 2 Independent Variables: Racial/Ethnic Composition and Region***

As noted above, the second level of analysis is the nonmetropolitan county or metropolitan area in which respondents are embedded. Percent black represents the percentage of the respondent's county/metropolitan-area population that is black. Percent Hispanic represents the percentage of the respondent's county/metropolitan-area population that is Hispanic. Current region of residence is coded in the same manner as the variable measuring region at age 16. As we mentioned before, the effects of racial/ethnic composition may be confounded with region. However, collinearity diagnostics for these and other variables showed no serious problems.<sup>17</sup>

### **Method and Analytic Strategy**

We employ multi-level modeling techniques using HLM 5.04 software. Given the hierarchical structure of the data, it is inappropriate to use OLS

<sup>14</sup>Supplementary analyses (available on request) reveal that the effect of age is not curvilinear. We also tested for an interaction between region at age 16 and age, but it was not significant.

<sup>15</sup>We include *family income* as opposed to *personal income* because the latter has far more missing cases. We code income as a dichotomous variable with missing cases represented as 0 to avoid losing further cases. Alternate coding schemes produced substantively similar results.

<sup>16</sup>In 2000, the federal poverty threshold for a family of four with two children was \$17,463. Because income is a categorical variable in the GSS, we code incomes less than \$17,500 as 1.

<sup>17</sup>We also ran OLS fixed-intercept models with robust standard errors in Stata 7.0 and obtained substantively similar results; furthermore, we conducted collinearity diagnostics of these models (available on request). Tolerance was not reached in any of the models; variance inflation factors (VIFs) for all variables in all models range from 1.02 to 2.89. We also ran models excluding some of the variables with the highest VIFs and obtained substantively similar results.

regression because the model will violate the assumptions of independence of errors and constant error variance (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). Consequently, OLS models will produce inefficient estimates and biased standard errors.

Our preliminary analyses indicate that there is significant and thus sufficient variation in anti-black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes among counties/metropolitan areas to justify the use of multi-level modeling.<sup>18</sup> Because of the potential for stereotypes to shape contact rather than the other way around, we build our models by first including measures of individual characteristics that theoretical and/or empirical work suggests will shape stereotypes in the Level 1 model. Next, we include percent black/Hispanic and region in the Level 2 model. Finally, we add measures of contact in the Level 1 model. In its entirety, the Level 1 model is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{STEREOTYPES}_{ij} = & \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} (\text{CONTACT}) + \beta_{2j} (\text{REGION16}) \\ & + \beta_{3j} (\text{AGE} - \overline{\text{AGE}}) + \beta_{4j} \\ & (\text{FAMILY INCOME}) + \beta_{5j} (\text{MARRIED}) + \beta_{6j} (\text{EDUCATION} \\ & - \overline{\text{EDUCATION}}) + \beta_{7j} (\text{MALE}) + r_{ij}. \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

This Level 1 intercept,  $\beta_{0j}$ , represents the average level of anti-black/Hispanic stereotypes when all Level 1 dummy variables are set at 0 and all Level 1 continuous variables are set at their means (as in the equation). The error term,  $r_{ij}$ , represents the random effects of the model.

At the second level of analysis, the Level 1 intercept,  $\beta_{0j}$ , is modeled as a function of the Level 2 intercept,  $\gamma_{00}$ , the Level 2 variables, and a Level 2 error term as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \beta_{0j} = & \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\% \text{MINORITY} - \overline{\% \text{MINORITY}})_j \\ & + \gamma_{02} (\text{REGION})_j + u_{0j} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where  $\beta_{pj} = \gamma_{p0}$  for  $p > 0$ .

As is indicated by the notation immediately above, all coefficients except for the intercept are fixed; they do not randomly vary across counties and metropolitan areas.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>However, only about 5 percent of the variance in anti-black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes is among counties/MSAs, which runs a bit counter to what cultural and group threat theories might expect.

<sup>19</sup>Other analyses (available on request) reveal that the effects of contact do not vary by percent minority or region. Also, the effects of region at age 16 do not vary across counties/MSAs.

## Results

First, we turn our attention to anti-black stereotypes. Table 2 presents the results from random-intercept hierarchical models of contact, personal characteristics, and county/metropolitan-area characteristics on anti-black stereotypes.

Looking at the effects of contact first, we find some qualified support for hypotheses derived from contact theory. Although potentially intimate forms of contact such as community and family contact are not significantly related to anti-black stereotypes, school and workplace contact are, net of all other variables in the model. Taking school contact as an example, whites who report knowing a black from school or college score on average a little more than half a point lower on a 23-point anti-black stereotype scale than their counterparts who do not know a black from school or college. The effect of workplace contact is even larger. Model 6 reveals that whites who know a black from work are significantly less likely to express anti-black stereotypes than their counterparts in the adult labor force.

The results in Table 2 do not support cultural theory's suggestion that whites who were raised in the South are more likely to express anti-black stereotypes, regardless of whether the results in a reduced model (i.e., Model 1) or a full model (i.e., Model 3) are examined. Generally, though, anti-black stereotypes are significantly more prevalent among whites currently living in the South,<sup>20</sup> which is consistent with cultural theory's prediction. The positive effect of age supports cultural theory's implication that older people are more likely to hold anti-black stereotypes.

The relatively consistent positive effect for percent black is in line with group threat theory's notion that a large presence of blacks arouses threat and heightens stereotypes.<sup>21</sup> To put this into context, though, consider an average white, unmarried female who lives in a non-Southern county or metropolitan area with an average number of blacks: she would need only an additional year of education to counteract the heightened anti-black stereotypes that would be expected if the percentage of blacks in her county or metropolitan area increased by seven percentage points. This same woman would only need to know a black from school to offset the heightened anti-black stereotypes that would be expected if the percentage of blacks in her county or metropolitan area increased by nearly 20 percentage points.

Next, we turn our attention to anti-Hispanic stereotypes. Table 3 presents the results from random-intercept hierarchical models of contact, personal

<sup>20</sup>The exception to this occurs in Model 6. Because analyses controlling for work status produced substantively similar results, the noneffects for South (and percent black) are probably due to the smaller Level 2 sample size and less variance of stereotypes among counties/MSAs.

<sup>21</sup>Supplementary analyses (available on request) revealed that the effect of percent black is not curvilinear, contrary to what Blalock (1967) would predict.

TABLE 2

Random-Intercept Hierarchical Linear Models of Contact with a Black, Personal Characteristics, and Metropolitan/County Characteristics on Anti-Black Stereotypes, GSS (2000): N = 889 Non-Hispanic Whites<sup>a</sup>

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Fixed Effects</b>						
<i>Level 1 Variables</i>						
Community contact	—	—	-0.23 (0.24)	—	—	—
School contact	—	—	—	-0.52* (0.21)	—	—
Family contact	—	—	—	—	0.44 (0.41)	—
Workplace contact	—	—	—	—	—	-0.73** (0.23)
Region at age 16 (South = 1, other = 0)	0.31 (0.27)	-0.39 (0.33)	-0.39 (0.33)	-0.41 (0.33)	-0.40 (0.33)	-0.16 (0.39)
Age	0.04** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Marital status (married = 1)	0.30 (0.23)	0.27 (0.23)	0.25 (0.23)	0.24 (0.23)	0.27 (0.23)	0.11 (0.28)
Family income (impooverished = 1)	-0.49 (0.30)	-0.40 (0.32)	-0.39 (0.32)	-0.36 (0.32)	-0.41 (0.32)	-0.13 (0.45)
Education	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.21*** (0.05)	-0.21*** (0.04)	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.21*** (0.04)
Male	0.68** (0.25)	0.68** (0.25)	0.69** (0.24)	0.71** (0.24)	0.70** (0.25)	0.71** (0.25)

TABLE 2—Continued

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>Level 2 Variables</i>						
Percent black	—	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
South	—	0.62* (0.32)	0.65* (0.32)	0.64* (0.32)	0.63* (0.32)	0.60 (0.34)
Intercept	1.78*** (0.23)	1.79*** (0.24)	1.91*** (0.28)	2.01*** (0.26)	1.74*** (0.23)	1.95*** (0.31)
<b>Random Effects</b>						
<i>Variance Components</i>						
Intercept, $U_{0j}$	0.14*	0.11*	0.11*	0.13*	0.11*	0.01

<sup>a</sup>In Models 1–4, in Model 5,  $N = 887$ . In Model 6, the sample consists of 629 non-Hispanic whites who are currently in the labor force.

+  $p \leq 0.10$ ; \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  (two-tailed  $t$ -tests, except for univariate tests of random effects).

NOTES: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All continuous variables are centered around their grand means, except for dummy variables. All variables excluding the intercept are fixed.

TABLE 3

Random-Intercept Hierarchical Linear Models of Contact with a Hispanic, Personal Characteristics, and Metropolitan/County Characteristics on Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes, GSS (2000): N = 854 Non-Hispanic Whites<sup>a</sup>

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Fixed Effects</b>						
<i>Level 1 Variables</i>						
Community contact	—	—	-0.52** (0.19)	—	—	—
School contact	—	—	—	-0.39+ (0.22)	—	—
Family contact	—	—	—	—	-0.43 (0.39)	—
Workplace contact	—	—	—	—	—	-0.06 (0.23)
Region at age 16 (West = 1, other = 0)	-0.21 (0.26)	-0.02 (0.34)	-0.01 (0.34)	0.05 (0.34)	0.02 (0.34)	0.32 (0.44)
Age	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
Marital status (married = 1)	-0.06 (0.24)	-0.07 (0.24)	-0.10 (0.24)	-0.10 (0.24)	-0.07 (0.24)	-0.24 (0.29)
Family income (impooverished = 1)	-0.44 (0.33)	-0.45 (0.33)	-0.44 (0.32)	-0.44 (0.33)	-0.48 (0.34)	0.21 (0.46)
Education	-0.19*** (0.04)	-0.18*** (0.05)	-0.18*** (0.05)	-0.17*** (0.04)	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.24*** (0.05)
Male	0.04 (0.20)	0.03 (0.20)	0.07 (0.20)	0.02 (0.20)	0.04 (0.20)	0.12 (0.21)

TABLE 3—Continued

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Level 2 Variables</b>						
Percent Hispanic	—	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)
West	—	-0.14 (0.39)	-0.06 (0.39)	-0.18 (0.39)	-0.16 (0.40)	-0.28 (0.40)
Intercept	1.25*** (0.19)	1.27*** (0.19)	1.46*** (0.21)	1.41*** (0.21)	1.32*** (0.18)	0.95*** (0.22)
<b>Random Effects</b>						
<i>Variance Components</i>						
Intercept, $u_{0j}$	0.24**	0.22**	0.21**	0.23**	0.22**	0.03

<sup>a</sup>In Models 1–4, In Model 5,  $N = 852$ . In Model 6, the sample consists of 604 non-Hispanic whites who are currently in the labor force.

+  $p \leq 0.10$ ; \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  (two-tailed  $t$ -tests, except for univariate tests of random effects).

NOTES: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All continuous variables are centered around their grand means, except for dummy variables. All variables excluding the intercept are fixed.

characteristics, and county/metropolitan-area characteristics on anti-Hispanic stereotypes.

As Table 3 indicates, the processes shaping anti-Hispanic stereotypes are in many ways different from those shaping anti-black stereotypes. First, whereas whites' contact with blacks in school and at work helps to disconfirm anti-African-American stereotypes, whites' contact with Hispanics in their community and at school helps to disconfirm anti-Hispanic stereotypes. It is quite interesting that a potentially intimate form of contact such as that occurring in one's community does not have an effect on whites' anti-black stereotypes, but it helps to disconfirm anti-Hispanic stereotypes. Yet, contact helps to disconfirm both anti-black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes when it occurs in the school, net of the effects of other independent variables, including the relatively potent effect of education.

Second, whereas anti-black stereotypes are more prevalent in the South than in the non-South, anti-Hispanic stereotypes are not more prevalent in the West. Moreover, whites raised in the West are no more likely than others elsewhere to express unfavorable stereotypes of Hispanics. These findings run somewhat counter to what cultural theory would predict: to the extent that there is a negative image of Hispanics rooted in American culture, it is not most prevalent in the West.

Finally, whereas percent black has a positive and relatively consistent significant effect on anti-black stereotypes, percent Hispanic has a negative but insignificant effect on anti-Hispanic stereotypes. Given that the effect of percent Hispanic is the direction opposite to that suggested by group threat theory, this finding is probably *not* simply an artifact of the level of aggregation (e.g., metropolitan area/county) at which this variable is measured. This suggests that whites are not threatened by a large presence of Hispanics to the extent that they are threatened by a large presence of blacks.

## **Conclusion**

At a time when scholars have focused on the determinants of attitudes toward desegregation, affirmative action, and related policies, this article has attempted to direct attention to the effects of the kinds of contact that these policies are supposed to promote on whites' stereotypes. In so doing, we tested three theories that are usually examined in isolation from one another—contact, cultural, and group threat theories—in an attempt to understand their applicability not only to whites' stereotypes of blacks, but also to whites' stereotypes of Hispanics. Our results indicate a need for more particularized theories of racial and ethnic attitudes that speak to differences between whites' stereotypes of blacks versus Hispanics and how these differences manifest themselves in the effects of contact, culture, and racial/ethnic composition.

After controlling for other factors that theoretical and empirical work suggested would come causally prior to stereotypes, our findings lend qualified support to contact theory's general proposition that contact helps to disconfirm stereotypes. Specifically, we find that whites who know Hispanics in their communities are less likely to express anti-Hispanic stereotypes; whites who know blacks and Hispanics from school and college are less likely to express stereotypes of both of these groups; and among whites in the labor force, those who know blacks from work are less likely to express anti-black stereotypes. Of these findings, the latter is the most surprising. The differential effect of workplace contact on anti-black versus anti-Hispanic stereotypes may be due to qualitative differences in this form of contact that our measures are not detecting, especially the extent to which this contact is between individuals of equal status. Given that a larger share of blacks were in relatively high-status occupations such as managerial, professional specialty, and technical occupations in 2000 (U.S. Census, 2001), contact between blacks and whites at work is more likely to be equal status than contact between Hispanics and whites at work. This is only one possible explanation for the differential effect of workplace contact on stereotypes, and as we note below, further investigation is needed.

Perhaps more surprising is that what we believe to be the most intimate form of contact under examination here—family contact—did not have an effect on whites' stereotypes of blacks or Hispanics. This may be due to the fact that most whites who know blacks and Hispanics as relatives probably know them involuntarily through racial/ethnic intermarriage. Of all the forms of contact examined in this article, this was one of the most recent to receive official sanction from the federal government—namely, when the Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional in 1967 (*Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1). Since that time, whites have become increasingly supportive of individuals' *legal* rights to marry outside their race, but only slightly more than half of whites said they *approved* of racial intermarriages in 1997; and, of course, very few actually marry outside their race (Schuman et al., 1997). Despite its intimacy, then, interracial/interethnic contact in the family may be too stigmatized to disconfirm stereotypes. Again, though, subsequent research needs to explore this explanation.

Additionally, our results lend some support to cultural theory's propositions. Anti-black stereotypes remain more pronounced in the South, but we do not find that whites raised in the South are more likely to express anti-black stereotypes. Along with the consistently positive effect for age, this finding supports Sears's (1988) suggestion that adulthood cultural socialization remains important for the acquisition and perpetuation of anti-black stereotypes, bearing in mind that this article did not attempt to do justice to the complex interactions among age, period, and cohort effects. To the lesser extent that a negative collective image of *Hispanics* exists, our results indicate that anti-Hispanic stereotypes are not significantly pronounced in the West or among whites raised in the West. Altogether,

cultural theory offers a better account of the processes shaping anti-black stereotypes than anti-Hispanic stereotypes, perhaps because of qualitative differences in the groups' historical experiences in these regions that our measures cannot detect. Nonetheless, cultural theory's suggestion that these negative images are too powerful to be displaced by contact may need to be modified in light of our findings.

Finally, our results shed light on the strengths and limitations of group threat theory in explaining stereotypes. Consistent with group threat theory, we find that whites living in areas with a large number of blacks express higher levels of anti-black stereotypes. This finding lends greater credence to group threat theory because it is net of various forms of contact, region, and region of socialization. Yet, our results add new weight to evidence suggesting that group threat theory is more successful in explaining stereotypes of what is arguably the most visible racial group in our society—blacks (see, e.g., Taylor, 1998). Like cultural theory, group threat theory is much less successful in explaining whites' stereotypes of other groups, such as Hispanics.

Irrespective of the influence of culture and racial/ethnic composition, contact can and does help to disconfirm stereotypes. Although the effects of contact are modest in an absolute sense, even relatively superficial contact helps to counteract some of the effects of other sources of stereotypes. As such, our results lend qualified support to the continuation of racial/ethnic policies that are designed to bring racial/ethnic groups into contact with one another. By promoting black-white contact and exposing whites to new information, desegregation and affirmative action policies in schools and workplaces are likely to help disconfirm anti-black stereotypes. If taken together with research that indicates that anti-black prejudice and stereotypes are declining both inside and outside of the South as a result of rising educational levels and cohort replacement (Firebaugh and Davis, 1988; Quillian, 1996), our results suggest that the potent combination of education, cohort replacement, and policies that promote contact will help to further reduce anti-black prejudice and stereotypes inside and outside of the South.

Our results suggest that affirmative action policies in workplaces may not be as successful in disconfirming whites' stereotypes of Hispanics. However, similar policies targeted at schools and residential neighborhoods may have beneficial effects. Because the effects of contact are relatively small, though, policymakers would be prudent to continue such policies in conjunction with educational policies that attempt to raise whites' awareness of Hispanic culture.

We conclude with a few directions for future research. First, future research should explore the qualitative component of contact in an attempt to further understand why some forms of contact differentially affect racial and ethnic stereotypes. Second, future research should continue to test these theories or their variants against one another, incorporating measures of

*neighborhood* segregation, more fine-grained measures of culture, and measures of *subjective* group threat. Third, given that some of the theories examined in this article have a historical component to them, an ideal research design would explore the exact contributions of contact, culture, and racial/ethnic composition in producing changes in stereotypes and prejudice *over time* in the United States. Finally, theory and research on racial and ethnic attitudes in the United States should continue to reflect the changing face of racial/ethnic diversity in American society. Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the country, making it increasingly difficult to justify the continuation of the black-white dichotomy that has characterized the largest share of research on racial and ethnic relations in the United States.

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